

# Medical Representative in Bangladesh: a Job with Different Pattern

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## Abstract

Pharmaceutical industry is one of the progressive sectors in Bangladesh economy and medical representatives play important role in achieving the company sales target. There is paucity of literatures in this field. Therefore, it was aimed to describe the daily job life of a medical representative based on close observations. Authors gained insights from unstructured interview of medical representatives, marketing personnel, training department personnel of the representative and top executives of pharmaceutical companies. Medical representatives are working with intense sales pressure, very little holiday, huge job insecurity and very little time to be with family in a biphasic job schedule. This article will provide a glimpse to the job seekers to compare their options and hope to draw attention of the policy makers to make the job more attractive.

## Keywords:

Pharma marketing, Medical Representatives, Reps, Bangladesh

## Introduction:

Pharmaceutical industry is one of the progressive sectors in Bangladesh economy [1,2]. It contributes 1% to the country's GDP and is the third largest industry in terms of contribution to government revenue [1, 2, 3]. The current market size is about 12,100 million with having almost persistently double-digit growth [2]. The market is almost self-sufficient in meeting local demand as 97% of the drugs are manufactured locally and is exporting to 92 countries [1, 3, 4]. There are 267 licensed pharmaceutical companies in Bangladesh for manufacturing the pharmaceutical products [1, 2, 4]. The market is principally driven by the prescriptions of doctors, and company personnel try to motivate doctors to prescribe their own company brands by personal selling, clinical meetings, seminars, symposia, etc. [1]. Medical representatives regularly make sales call to doctors by sharing scientific information and competitive advantages of their products over the competitors. During prescription preparation doctors consider such factors and use brand names for treatment and patients buy the prescribed brands to raise sells of their

respective brands [1, 5, 6]. There is paucity of literatures in this field; therefore, it was aimed to describe the daily job life of a medical representative based on close observations.

### **Methods:**

Authors gained insights from unstructured interview of medical representatives, marketing personnel, training department personnel of the representative and top executives of pharmaceutical companies. Authors also have insight from experiences of having working as a sells, marketing and training executive as well as experiencing of daily calls from representatives during chamber practice.

### **Description:**

Medical sales representatives, commonly known as 'reps' are a strategic link between healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical companies. They promote the sale of the products manufactured by their employer companies. The products include medicines, prescription drugs and medical equipment, which are being promoted to a wide range of professionals from pharmacists and nurses to general practitioners and hospital doctors. They work very tactfully to increase the awareness and use as well as sells of promoted products.

### **Recruitment:**

During recruitment employers prefers science graduates with relaxation the criteria on the basis of experience and company ranking. After recruitment, usually employers train them to be presentable in regards to the company marketing policy, which is mostly dominated by marketing and human resource department. After successful training period, reps are appointed in the vacant territory of the company, provided with sample carrying bag, motorbike, mobile handset and a SIM card. The graduates in the field of life sciences, pharmacy, medicine, nursing and dentistry get extra attention while the appointment as a rep. A business or marketing degree may also be helpful, especially if accompanied by some knowledge of medical sales.

### **Daily work:**

Unlike the other jobs, reps are bound to pass a very busy life and they have to perform bi-phasic duty. Phase-1 starts at 8 am, when they have to report their bosses for daily work plan as well as previous day sells and call performance for about half to one hour. Then, they move to their working institutional gate to convey greetings with their fixed physicians while they enter into their offices in the morning. After that, they prepare themselves adequately to make calls to the targeted physicians with targeted products by detailing or presenting materials supplied by marketing department of the company. During entering into the physician's chamber for making a call, most of the time, they have to satisfy the attendant of the physician, gatekeeper of the hospital, sister attending the physicians and others who have accessibility to the physicians to the extent of motivation. Usually morning shift ends around 2 pm with completion of communications with the pharmacy man to ensure their persistent sells order adjacent to the institute. The

second phase starts at 5 pm with reporting to the supervisor followed by taking sells orders from the pharmacy man. At this phase, they have play very crucial role to satisfy the order-giving persons as they have immense role on selling their products. In Bangladesh pharmacy men play a significant role as they can routinely change the brand of the prescribed product so, they used to take tolls from the company people specially from the reps. Then, their responsibility is to make calls to their fixed doctors with prioritized brands in accordance to the physicians preferable time. Usually, this phase ends at about 11 pm. Regarding holiday, they usually get 1 or 2 holidays in a month as because they have to visit the weekly visiting physicians in the weekends. In Bangladesh, physicians have a tendency to run holiday chambers remote from their working institute and for this holiday chambers they can promote the prescription drugs immensely.

### **Overall Life:**

In Bangladesh, their life is not so smooth and their job satisfaction not very high [1]. They have to work with very strict sales target, which is often refreshed monthly and a constant push from the marketing department of the company. Nevertheless, they poor have their job security [1]. If they can't reach the target, they are transferred to another section and sometimes may lose their job.

Their process of selling involves getting in touch with the potential customers and detecting their necessities. They do not sale products directly to buyers as the vendors do, rather patients pay for prescription drugs and physicians control their access [5, 6]. They persuade the physicians to prescribe particular drugs from their companies and ensure that they are following their guidelines. To keep the doctors motivated on their companies, they offer gifts adjusting with the rank, number of regular patients and social status of the physicians; on behalf of the company marketing strategy [1, 5]. It is firmly believed that increasing visits by medical representatives increase the prescription rate of a particular drug. They are trained well to assess physicians' personalities, drug preference and practice styles. They remember the physicians' family life, professional interests and important occasions to celebrate important occasions and thus keeping them motivated [6]. But the prescriptions are found to be influenced by a variety of factors. From the representatives' perspective, prescriptions are mostly influenced by easy brand availability of the promoted drug, image of the company of which the promotion is being done and regular promotion of the representatives [3]. On the other hand, doctors prefer reliable scientific information and experiences gained from personal feedback on the drugs from the patients [2]. The harder to convince the physicians, the more pressure mounts on the medical representatives. The activities of medical representatives often helps in promoting local drugs as reflected in some studies as the greater the sale of the local drugs, the stronger the economy of the country [7]. Broadly, reps arrange appointments with doctors, pharmacists and hospital medical teams, which include pre-arranged appointments or regular 'cold' calling: make presentations to doctors and pharmacists in the retail sector. They also organize CMEs, conferences for doctors and other medical staff; building and maintaining positive working relationships with medical staff and supporting administrative staff; keep detailed records of all contacts; reach (and if possible exceeding) annual sales targets; plan work schedules and weekly, monthly timetables; regularly attending company meetings. They have be keep themselves up to date with the latest clinical data supplied by the company, and interpret, present and discuss this data with health professionals during presentations; monitor competitor activity and competitors' products; maintain

knowledge of new developments in the National Health Service (NHS), anticipate potential negative and positive impacts on the business and adapting strategy accordingly.

### Benefits:

The profession provides benefits to the reps in different angles such as monthly fixed salary, incentives for target achievements, yearly bonus, quarterly bonus, trips for the achievers and other such monetary benefits that vary from a company to another company. The reps also get mobile allowances, transport allowances and other such field work related allowances. Companies arrange regular training for personal development of reps. Promotion to superior responsibility, salary and facility structure grossly vary from a company to another company. Many pharmaceutical companies are multinational, providing some opportunities to work abroad.

High commitment and low turnover intention culminate in favorable condition in an organization. Commitment depends on job satisfaction, motivation, organizational citizenship behavior and job performance [8]. As the pharmaceutical companies basically hard regarding sales target achievement from the medical representatives without considering their personal life, medical representatives are not completely satisfied in most cases [1].

### Conclusion

Medical reps have important role on the company growth and they are working in a hyper competitive market in Bangladesh with intense sales pressure, very little holiday, huge job insecurity and very little time to be with family. There is paucity of literature regarding the life of medical reps in a country like Bangladesh. This article will provide a glimpse to the job seekers to compare their options and hope to draw attention of the policy makers to make the job more attractive.

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